



2006 Committee Accomplishments

- In 2006, the North Carolina Executive Committee for Highway Safety expanded from 6 Working Groups to 14. New Working Groups include:
 - Intersection Safety
 - Motorcycle Safety
 - Older Driver Safety
 - Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety
 - Public Information & Education
 - Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety
 - Incident Management
 - Driver Education
- As required by SAFETEA-LU, North Carolina completed its Strategic Highway Safety Plan and received approval for the plan from the Secretary of NCDOT and the Federal Highway Administration. Available on the ECHS Web site, the plan will be a working document, with periodic updates made throughout its execution.
- Support from the Committee helped pave the way for the passage of several key highway safety laws in the state:
- Senate Bill 774, which makes it illegal for backseat passengers to ride without a seat belt.
- Senate Bill 1289, which restricts cell phone use by drivers under the age of 18.

Working Group Updates

Increasing Safety Belt Use

The *Seat Belt Use Enhancement Act* (Senate Bill 774) went into effect Dec. 1, 2006 requiring all motor vehicle passengers to wear seat belts. The penalty for violating the law is a \$10 fine. Violators will receive warnings until July 1, 2007. In addition, the exemptions for commercial vehicles and vehicles designed for carrying more than 10 passengers was also eliminated. Senate Bill 774 was endorsed by the NC ECHS and the North Carolina Child Fatality Task Force.



What is ECHS?

In an effort to coordinate the many safety initiatives both within and outside of the Department of Transportation, with an emphasis on efficiency of resources and the prioritization of programs, the N.C. Executive Committee for Highway Safety (ECHS) was formed and held its first meeting in April 2003.

The ECHS membership comprises experts in all disciplines related to highway safety. These members have access to current and potentially available resources to improve highway safety. The ECHS strives to identify, prioritize, promote and support all emphasis areas in the AASHTO Strategic Highway Safety Plan as well as other emphasis areas in an effort to save lives and reduce injuries.



Next Meeting

January 16, 2007

9:30 a.m.

Chief Engineer's Conference Room

Meeting Reminders

- Please send all working group minutes to Cliff Braam immediately following for posting to the ECHS Web site.
- All working group strategies to be presented at the next ECHS meeting need to be submitted no later than 2 weeks prior to the meeting.
- *SafetyLine* is compiled and designed by the Public Information and Education Working Group. To submit content for the newsletter, please email Katy Jones @ jones@hsrc.unc.edu

New Items Added to ECHS Website

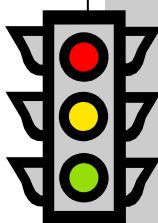
- Read the Executive Committee for Highway Safety Strategic Highway Safety Plan.
- Catch up on missed meetings by reviewing meeting minutes from past meetings.



Older Driver Safety

The Older Driver Working Group continues to work on two strategies recently approved by the ECHS. The first strategy, "Improve Signage at Non-Standard Interchange Approaches" involves a pilot project where additional signage will be placed in advanced of "non-typical" interchanges (typically cloverleaf designs) to assist the motorists in getting in the correct lane depending on their desired direction of travel. The pilot project will be evaluated and the results utilized to determine if additional signage is beneficial and should be used on a more wide spread basis.

The second strategy "Identify Hazardous Intersections and Improve Their Safety for Older Drivers" will identify intersection locations where older drivers are over represented or have a higher than average occurrence of being involved in a crash. These locations will be systematically reviewed along with an older driver representative to determine appropriate countermeasures. This strategy was also reviewed by the Intersection working group.



Intersection Safety

The Intersection Safety Working Group is currently refining its strategy for advanced street name signs. The draft guide on use and placement has been completed and is being circulated for final review and comments.

The group is also pursuing an additional strategy for automated enforcement at intersections. This strategy would seek the appropriate legislation to allow statewide authority to allow automated enforcement of red light violations in North Carolina. Currently, each municipality that wishes to utilize red light cameras, must individually obtain legislation to allow the placement and use of the cameras. Passing this legislation would make it easier for safety officials to add this tool to their toolbox as a last resort for locations with a demonstrated need.

Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Working Group is working to execute two strategies recently approved by the Committee. The first strategy is to improve bicycle and pedestrian information provided in the DMV Drivers Handbook. The second strategy is to provide better education about bicycle and pedestrian safety issues to NC law enforcement officers. The ECHS augmented this strategy to include court officials.

The group is also looking into additional ideas. The Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation (DBPT) will draft a resolution supporting an item on NCDOT's legislative agenda to allow counties to construct transportation facilities, including sidewalks. DBPT will circulate draft resolution to the working group for comments/endorsement. The resolution will also ask the Executive Committee to consider language that includes accommodations for bicycle facilities

The Working Group is also developing two subcommittees: a subcommittee to work on a proposed strategy to broaden NCDOT's current Pedestrian Policy and a subcommittee to work on developing a resolution on school site selection to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety and accessibility.





Working Group Updates

Keeping Drivers Alert

The Keeping Drivers Alert Working Group has been developing a plan that would allow drowsy drivers to call an 800 number to find out about hotels near them that are participating in what the group hopes will be a state-wide campaign. The drowsy driver would call the 800 number, find the nearest participating hotel, and be able to book a room at a sizable discount. Issues to resolve are: How much is the standard discount (30%, 50%?), what the hours of operation (after 11 p.m., after midnight?), etc. The Working Group hopes to have the program up before March (spring break). Hotel industry members have been contacted about the concept and have endorsed it.

Lane Departure

To better address the broad issue of lane departure crashes, the Lane Departure Working Group has divided into four technical Working groups focusing on the following areas: 1) Positive Guidance, 2) Utility Pole Collisions, 3) Performance Measures and 4) Clear Recovery Areas.



Driver Education

The group has held its second meeting. Roughly half of the group composition consists of people from the driver education field. The group is exploring the opportunity for establishing a state wide Drivers Education Curriculum in addition to exploring other opportunities and areas to improve driver education. The group is currently compiling options for strategies to present to the Committee.

Motorcycle Safety

The Motorcycle Safety Working Group has no new strategies at this time. The group has received a \$143,000 grant to begin implementation of training and the public information and education activities previously approved by the committee.

Ensuring Drivers are Fully Licensed

The group will need legislation to carry forward the strategy "Temporary Impoundment of Vehicles for DWLR Operators" that has been previously approved by the ECHS. This strategy is a controversial issue and DOT may need some of its other safety partners to move forward with this.

CMV Safety

- This group has held ongoing sub-committee meetings in an effort to develop strategies to present to the entire board.

Speed

- No actions at this time.



Michael F. Easley
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